

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-02 INR-10 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

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INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

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AMEMBASSY LONDON

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AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USNMR SHAPE

USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 3397

USNMR SHAPE AND USCINCEUR FOR POLADS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, BE

SUBJECT: INTERNAL POLITICS - PROGNOSIS

REF: BRUSSELS 2064 AND 3321 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY. PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSION IS NOT EXPECTED TO AGREE ON KEY ASPECTS OF REGIONALIZATION BEFORE JULY 15 DEADLINE GOVERNMENT SET LAST JANUARY, WHICH WILL FORCE GOVERNMENT TO COME UP WITH ITS OWN PROPOSALS AFTER SUMMER RECESS. MEANWHILE, GOVERNMENT PARTIES HAVE AGREED ON LEGISLATION TO IMPLEMENT CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS, PASSAGE OF WHICH SEEMS PROBABLE SPITE OF LAST
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MINUTE EFFORTS OF SOCIALISTS TO SECURE SOME CATHOLIC CONCESSION TO HELP HIDE HIGH COSTS OF LEBURTON' S PREMIERSHIP. GOVERNMENT COALITION MAY THUS SURVIVE LAST WARM WEEKS OF JUNE BUT WILL SURELY FACE TORRID FALL. END SUMMARY.

2. REGIONALIZATION. SPECIAL PARLIMENTARY COMMISSION ON REGIONALIZATION HAS POURED SOME OIL ON TROUBLED WATERS OF FLEMING-FRANCOPHONE RELATIONS WITH ITS SCHOLARLY INQUIRIES INTO COMPLEX TECHNICAL PROBLEMS OF REGIONALIZING BELGIUM BUT IT IS NOT EXPECTED TO PRODUCE AGREED POSITIONS ON KEY POLITICAL ISSUES, WHICH ARE DELIMITATION OF BRUSSELS REGION, NATURE AND COMPOSITION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS, AND PARTITION OF REVENUES AMONG REGIONS. WITH EXPIRATION OF JULY 15 DEADLINE THAT GOVERNMENT SET FOR COMMISSION' S WORK, GOVERNMENT MUST EXERCISE ITS OPTION, AS EYSKENS GOVERNMENT DID WITH 1970 CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS, TO DEVELOP ITS OWN PROPOSALS TO PRESENT TO PARLIAMENT AFTER PARLIAMENT RECONVENES IN OCTOBER. REGIONALIZATION IS CRUCIAL TEST FOR LEBURTON' S GOVERNMENT.

3. SCHOOL AND CULTURAL PROGRAMS. GOVERNMENT PROGRAM SPELLED OUT IN CONSIDERABLE DETAIL PLANS FOR IMPLEMENTING 1970 CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS FOR CULTURAL (LINGUISTIC) AUTONOMY AND FOR IMPEMENING, EXPANDING, AND EVENTUALLY REVISING 1958 SCHOOL PACT. WHILE GOVERNMENT PARTIES AGREED ON PROTOCOL FOR REVISING SCHOOL PACT, TO WHICH VOLKSUNIE ALSO SUBSCRIBED, THEY QUICKLY RAN INTO PROBLEMS OVER INTERPRETATION OF PROGRAM PROVISIONS FOR INCREASING STATE SUBSIDIZATION OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS, WITH FLEMISH CATHOLICS PRESSING EVERY ADVANTAGE-TO WRING CONCESSIONS FROM THEIR COALITION PARTNERS. BY CONTRAST, PROBLEM OF PARTITION AND DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS FOR CULTURAL PURPOSES WAS EASILY RESOLVED: TO GREAT SATISFACTION OF LIBERALS, WHOSE OBJECTIVE WAS TO ASSURE RECOGNITION AND SUPPORT FOR NON-DOCTRINAL (I. E. NON- CATHOLIC, NON- SOCIALIST) GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS. CATHOLICS, HOWEVER, STEADFASTLY REFUSED TO MOVE CULTURAL LEGISLATION UNTIL SCHOOL ISSUE WAS RESOLVED.

4. SOCIALISTS' PROBLEMS. SOCIALIST RESISTENCE TO CATHOLIC DEMANDS ON SCHOOLS, LEAD BY FORMER VICE PRIME MINISTER AND PARTY CO-PRESIDENT COOLS, WAS PLAYING TO PIT; IF CATHOLICS WERE PREPARED TO SEE GOVERNMENT FALL OVER NUMBER OF MONKS THAT MAKE A MONASTERY

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(TECHERS LIVING IN RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES ARE TO BE SUBSIDIZED AT LOWER RATE), SOCIALIST WERE NOT, ESPECIALLY IN FACT OF TARNISH SOCIALISTS' IMAGE HAS ACQUIRED AS RESULT OF IBRAMCO REFINERY AFFAIR (BRUSSELS 2468) AND, MORE RECENTLY, DUBIOUS CONTRACTING PRACTICES IN SOCIALIST DIRECTED TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAPH SERVICE, THAT LEAD TO RESIGNATION OF STATE SECRETARY DUBOIS.

SOCIALISTS' SURRENDER ON SCHOOL ISSUE MAY THUS HAVE BEEN SOME-
WHAT LESS DRAMATIC THAN IT APPEARED ON SURFACE BUT SOCIALIST
LEADERS REMAINED SUFFICIENTLY CONCERNED OVER RANK- AND- FILE
REACTION TO TRY TO RETRIEVE SOME OF GROUND LOST WITH LAST- MINUTE
DEMAND JUNE 18 THAT PARLIAMENT APPROVE CHANGES IN STRICT BELGIAN
LAWS AGAINST ABORTION AND DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION ON
CONTRACEPTION IN RETURN FOR SOCIALIST ACCEPTANCE OF CULTURAL AND
EDUCATION BILLS.

5. AT BEST, LATEST SOCIALIST DEMAND SEEMS DESIGNED TO SECURE
CATHOLIC COMMITMENT FOR SOME FUTURE ACTION SINCE PREPARATION AND
PASSAGE OF LEGISLATION ON ABORTION WOULD BE DIFFICULT BEFORE
PARLIAMENT ADJOURNS. AT WORSE, IT PRESAGES SERIOUS SOCIALIST
EFFORT TO HOLD ALL LEGISLATION OVER TO FALL WHEN SOCIALIST
CONCESSIONS ON SCHOOLS MIGHT BE TRADED FOR THOSE OF FLEMISH
CATHOLICS ON REGIONALISATION. IF LATTER IS CASE, SURVIVAL OF
GOVERNMENT WILL HINGE ON CVP REACTIONS.
STRAUSZ- HUPE

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